



HANGAR NEWS



COPA Flight 65

As we celebrate 80 years of The Vernon Flying Club (and the Vernon Airport!) this year, we look back on the past and marvel at how far we've come...

c1968 Photo courtesy of the Vernon Museum and Archives and Melissa Hewson



Vernon Airport c1968. Photo courtesy of the Vernon Museum and Archives and Melissa Hewson



Photo by Brad Armstrong



Rust Remover lunchtime. See page 5 for more photos.

The 50th anniversary was a fabulous celebration



RCAF public relations personnel Val Ferguson, left, and Cheryl Hayden promote the annual quiet air show.
Morning Star photo by Brad Moore

Flying club salutes 50 years of service

by JASON MERCIER
Morning Star Writer

Fifty years is something to celebrate. That's just what the Vernon Flying Club and the 899 Wing Association of the Royal Canadian Air Force intend to do Sunday, August 18 with their Quiet Airshow.

The featured guest this year will be Dick Laidman, a former CEO of Pacific Western Airlines.

Laidman was the first commercial operator to land at the Vernon airport in 1946. Bob Filtness piloted the first aircraft landed onto the partially completed runway on July 10, 1946.

Early arrivals and other participants can start off the celebration early by attending a barbeque on the Saturday night.

Things kick-off the following morning

with a fly-in pancake breakfast. The day will be filled with helicopter rides and fixed-wing sight-seeing tours, skydiving, displays of vintage, military and recreational aircraft, water-bombing, rappelling and a search and rescue demonstration.

Aircraft owners as far away as Winnipeg and California have been invited to the event, which last time drew 4,000 people.

Event organizers are expecting up to 6,000 will attend this summer's event.

Airport businesses and users will display highlights of their contributions to Vernon and the surrounding communities.

Admission to the Quiet Airshow is by donation. Val Ferguson of the RCAF said any surplus will be donated to local charities or the cadet squadron.

FAR WE

Live

Join
at Cli

A b
located cen

Free P

Let's make

TEAR
WES

Modular Home

call us

Vernon airport has long history

by JASON MERCIER
Morning Star Writer

The City of Vernon, realizing that aviation had a future in Vernon, negotiated the purchase of the land on the Mission Hill plateau in 1929 for an airport.

By 1931, hangars had been erected and the runways were improved.

The second World War interrupted plans to make Vernon the commercial aviation centre of the Okanagan. In 1946, Vernon ratepayers voted to pay \$18,000 for 52 acres at the current site.

Unfortunately, not enough land was purchased to allow additional clearance.

The next year, Dick Laidman of L&M Air Services took the initiative and successfully negotiated 600 feet of extra land.

For this, he is considered the Founder of the Vernon airport.

Currently, the airport occupies 78 acres.

In 1995, there were 164 air ambulance flights as well as nearly 14,000 private and commercial flights at the airport.

At present, there are 10 aviation-based businesses employing 65 people with an annual payroll.



If It Feels Right DO IT!

- BALANCED BUDGETS!
- SECURE OUR HIGH QUALITY HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS!
- FIXED ELECTION DATES!
- VOTER'S WARRANTY!
- CRACK DOWN ON WELFARE FRAUD!
- COMPLETE PUBLIC INPUT ON ALL ABORIGINAL LAND CLAIM SETTLEMENTS!
- INITIATIVE AND RECALL!
- FREE VOTES IN THE LEGISLATURE!
- ALL CANADIANS AND PROVINCES EQUAL UNDER A CONSTITUTION!

X **WEISS, Heinz**
OFFICIAL CANDIDATE
REFORM BC

Our research
because you d
urge you to lo
our cause. We
finding a new
and our messa

REFOR

Authorized by David
financial agent &
Heinz Weiss



Aviation pioneer
Dick Laidman, left, helped establish the Vernon Regional Airport in 1946. At right, Laidman surveys the site that will now bear his name.

Airport founder and aviation pioneer honored at air show

by JASON MERCIER
Morning Star Writer

He was the first one to fly a DeHavilland Beaver, the legendary Canadian bush plane. As president of one of the largest airlines in the country, he guided a company once devoted to commercial service into the never-before-seen concept of passenger jet travel.

He also bought the first Boeing 737 ever made.

And unequivocally, he's the man who made the Vernon Regional Airport what it is today.

For all of these reasons and more, the Vernon Flying Club is today honoring Dick Laidman by giving the Vernon Regional Airport the honorary title of Laidman Field.

Laidman will be honored during opening ceremonies at the Quiet Air Show at 10 a.m., an event that also marks the 50th anniversary of the airport.

"Because of all the work he did, we call him the founder of the airport," said Val Ferguson, a member of the Vernon Flying Club and the 899 (North Okanagan) Wing RCAF Association.

"He was the one who sat on a fencepost with the chief of the Okanagan Band for three months. He was successful where other city officials failed."

It was 1946 when Laidman negotiated with the chief of the Okanagan Indian Band to have the airport's runway extended 600 feet.

"It was no easy task, but they were very helpful," Laidman said of the negotiations with the band's then-Chief Pierre Jack. "He was very helpful, he and his band. There were some very helpful people in their group."

Besides negotiating a lease with the Indian band, Laidman also jointly operated the first charter operation

out of the airport and was also the first president of the Vernon Flying Club.

"We just felt as an aviation pioneer, he should be accorded the honor," Ferguson said.

Laidman was born in Vernon Jubilee Hospital May 15, 1921 and attended Coldstream Elementary before his family moved into Vernon.

"During the time when I was finishing school I started working with Norm," said Dick Laidman.

For the past week, he's spent time with long-time friend Norm Brown and many other friends he made in the airplane business here. He's also had a few visits down to the Vernon Regional Airport.

"That was where I learned to fly," he said.

Laidman first got interested in aircraft during his early teenage years in Vernon before the Second World War, when he enrolled in a maintenance and overhaul course.

After graduating, he got a job offer to work in northern Ontario. While there, he wrote his engineer's licence.

"The war was just shaping up to be a war. We were having a tough time getting enough planes to service all the mines. There was lots of flying and lots of hard work."

"Basically, I'd made up my mind what I was going to do."

In 1940, Canadian Pacific bought the airline he was working for and six regional airlines. At that time, Canadian Pacific didn't have the national passenger routes of its major competitor, TransCanada Airlines.

"We were kind of left in the bush at that time."

Laidman next spent several years working in northern B.C., the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. Eventually, he got tired of working in the bush. In 1947, he returned to his

place of birth, Vernon, B.C., and formed L&M Airlines with Lumby-resident Peter Dyck and Jimmy Engels.

"I bought an Anson, a Stinson and we had two Cessna 140 training machines."

Ron Catt of Lumby got his first job working on planes with Laidman in the late 1940s.

"He landed out here in Lumby with his Foxmoth. I was interested in airplanes and I went down and talked with him," said Catt.

"He was really an interesting fella. I was 17 years old then and I wanted to be a licensed aircraft engineer. Planes were always the first thing on his mind."

Catt speaks with admiration about his former boss.

"He had big ideas and he followed through on them."

One of the memories that looms large for people working out of the Vernon airport at that time were the floods in the spring of 1948 that cut off the entire region from the Lower Mainland.

"There were six or seven flights a day," Catt said. "That was the only way to get to Vancouver. We worked from 3:30 in the morning 'til 10:30 at night."

Laidman, too, remembers the floods of that spring almost 50 years ago.

"In 1948 we had some really bad flooding. The rail couldn't get through to Vancouver, the buses couldn't get them to Vancouver."

"We took our Anson and tried to get people through. There were people trapped north of Kamloops. We had to get them out so they could get home again."

But that exciting time was the last time Laidman would fly out of Vernon.

"The cold winter took its toll on the fruit crops and so there wasn't much money around," he said.

So Laidman moved north, to the Burns Lake area and then on to Vancouver to work with Russ Baker when Baker confronted him one day and asked him to join him at Central B.C. Airlines.

"Baker said he'd like me to come down to Vancouver and take over as the operations manager of the company, which later became Pacific Western Airlines."

The company continued to expand its routes and purchase other smaller airlines in the west, even taking over some Canadian Pacific routes.

In 1958, Baker died suddenly. The company he and Laidman had built was left with a vacuum at the top.

"The story then was who was going to run the store," he said. "I was getting down to where I was going to fly a desk," he laughed.

"We were trying to build an airline service."

Laidman negotiated to get some northern routes from Canadian Pacific, which were mainly long haul freights. He remained chief pilot and flight operations manager for four years before the board chose him for president in 1963.

As president, he oversaw the introduction of air bus service in the passenger airline industry in Canada.

A son has continued the family tradition, flying as a senior captain for Canadian Air.

Laidman is still flying, although he sold his airplane a couple of years ago. He works as the Chief Engineer at the Pacific Flying Club at the Boundary Bay Airport in the Lower Mainland.

"One of these days, I'll probably quit flying. But I'm still medically fit and I still enjoy it."

The Morning Star 1996

Rust Remover

The 2026 Vernon Rust Remover was very well received by the 53 pilots who received Transport Canada approved recurrency training on May 9th. The seminar was an “intimate little affair” held in the clubhouse. The Friday Evening Social potluck supper was great, too. Thanks to all the volunteers who worked so hard to put on a good show.

Photos by Edie Schleiss

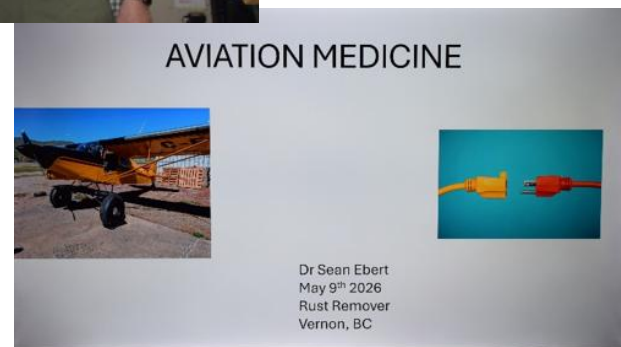


Rob McDicken, M/C and President, VFC with a “deer-in-the-headlights” look



Dr. Sean Ebert, CAME

Jordan Byng, Rob McDicken, Roberto Chiatto, Transport Canada





Kim Williams, arrives from Oliver



Ron Townson arrives from Penticton



Morning Coffee during Sign-in



Tom Glover, Grill Master



Sally Smith and Del Desrosiers, our Super Volunteers with just some of the baking donated by VFC members for the Rust Remover!



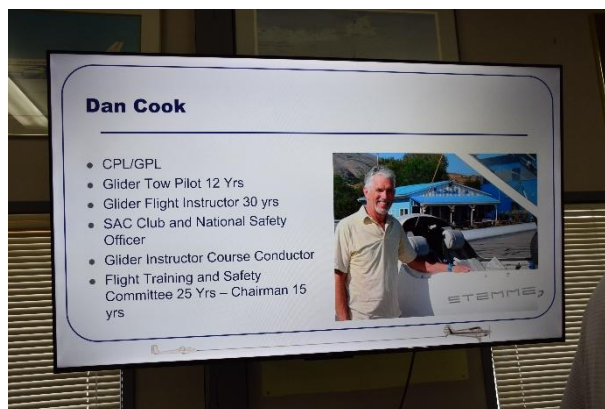
50/50 Winner Rob Snider from Kamloops (who very generously donated it back to VFC!)



New 80th Anniversary Commemorative Merchandise for sale



Dan Cook, The Neuology of Safety



Andrew Graham, Kamloops FIC Team Supervisor on Flight Planning and Self-Briefing

GUEST SPEAKERS AT OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS:

March:



One of our best meetings; well attended with about 40 people enjoying a delicious supper and two speakers.

Jared Ens-Remple, the Senior Manager from the City of Vernon's Real Estate Department, was invited to our meeting for a Q&A session regarding the recent survey from the City of Vernon seeking input from airport users regarding the airport's land leasing framework. The 10-year Airport Master Plan (2015-2025) has mostly been fulfilled (installation of deer fencing and the development of Captain Baily Way outstanding).

Steve Foord gave an interesting presentation regarding "*Formation Flying The Snowflakes Way*".

(Thanks, Steve, for the following article and photos!)



Okanagan residents can see them in the skies a couple times a week and at special occasions such as Remembrance Day, the Vernon Winter Carnival, and Canada Day.

The Vernon Snowflakes are an active group of RV aviators based in the Okanagan Valley who practice flying in close formation. The group was created more than 20 years ago when three RV builders from Vernon got together to experience formation flying.

Over the next ten years the group grew to five aircraft. At that time the group was fortunate to have John Swallow join, after completing his RV-7A. John was a former Airforce fighter pilot and a member of the 1967 Golden Centennaires (precursor to the Snowbirds) who flew over 100 airshows to celebrate Canada's golden anniversary. Under John's guidance and leadership the Snowflakes membership grew and larger formations were organized and practiced.

The current Snowflakes membership stands at ten, including members based in Penticton, Salmon Arm, and Vernon. Pilot's ages span from mid-forties to over 80. The following Van's RV types are represented: RV-4, RV-6A, RV-7, RV-7A, RV-8, RV-9A.

The group practices regularly (once or twice per week), visiting the local airports to attend flying club coffee sessions, or flying out for breakfast or lunch to the Lower Mainland or the Kootenays. Members are encouraged to learn to fly in all positions, including flight lead. The group holds periodic group safety meetings to review and enhance their Standard Operating Practices.

For 2025 Remembrance Day the group made an appearance at 8 cenotaphs in the region.) Also included are special events such as significant birthdays of veterans and memorial flights for fellow aviators. Brad Armstrong, pilot, aircraft owner, and friend of the Snowflakes enjoys making videos of Snowflakes flights. These can be found on Brad's YouTube Channel "letsflyinter".

The Snowflakes, RV Formation Flying Team



April:

Our meetings are always so good! Terrific food (with special thanks going to the volunteers who come early and stay late!), great conversation, and then a short meeting followed by a great speaker.

April's speaker was **Rob McDicken** who gave a very interesting presentation on **"20 Years a Corporate Pilot"**. He talked about flying a wide variety of aircraft and included a fascinating overview of the Kal Tire operation and the Air Division that Tom Foord started in 1967. Tom called the aircraft "his time machine" as it saved him so much time being able to travel by air rather than road as he visited his many retail operations. Vernon is lucky to be HQ for this world-wide company.

Rob's love of all things-aviation was on clear display and we enjoyed seeing pictures from his travels from Ekati Diamond Mine in the Northwest Territories to Mexico.



Laura-Lee Lockheed presents Rob with a 1936 print of the Yankee Clipper in San Francisco as a token of her appreciation.

Kal Tire began in Vernon, BC, in June 1953 when founder Tom Foord opened a single service station. Named after the nearby Kalamalka Lake, the company grew from a small Okanagan Valley shop into one of Canada's largest independent tire dealers and an international mining tire powerhouse.

The incredible journey of Kal Tire from a local Vernon garage to a global enterprise features several milestones and highlights:

The Founding: In 1953, Saskatchewan-born veteran Tom Foord and his business partner Jim Lochhead started the business with a focus on servicing passenger vehicles and local logging operations in the Okanagan.

Global Expansion: In the early 1970s, the company launched its **Kal Tire Mining Tire Group**, extending its service footprint to some of the most remote mine sites across five continents.

Retreading & Recycling: Long before sustainability was an industry standard, the company pioneered circular economy practices by opening commercial tire retread and recycling facilities, operating the largest retreading operation in Canada.

Headquarters: Despite expanding to more than 20 countries with thousands of employees, the company has kept its corporate headquarters firmly rooted in Vernon.

Community Philanthropy: Founder Tom Foord was deeply involved in the local community—earning the Order of BC in 2000 for his philanthropy and civic leadership. The family legacy and connection to the city remain strong, including the acquisition of naming rights for the local Kal Tire Place arena.

May:

Photo by Alison Crerar

Another fantastic meal and meeting on Tuesday, May 19th! We had a great crowd and a visitor complimented us on our "great vibes"!

Guest Speaker, **Greg Reeder**, Manager of Aviation Recruiting for Mission Aviation Fellowship of Canada, shared the mission and vision of MAF. "Serving Together to bring Help, Hope, and Healing through Aviation".

Very impressive organization

They operate a fleet of roughly 116 aircraft at more than 1000 destinations mostly in areas devastated by civil unrest, famine, disaster or just very poor access to medical care due to geography. They have partnered with Prairie College's Prairie Aviation Training Centre (PATC) in Three Hills, AB to provide training to prospective pilots.

"With our airplanes, you're able to be there within a few hours and then pick them up and transport them. A 20-minute flight can save somebody anywhere from six hours to two days of travel, depending on where they are in the world."

Check out their website for videos and photos of some of amazing work. <https://maf.ca/>

Oh, and he flew into Vernon with his friend, Gerry Fiser in Gerry's Icon. Gerry is a long-time member of the Abbotsford Flying Club. They are both welcome back any time!



Everyone wanted a close-up look at the Icon



Wing folded back on the Icon

Volunteer Appreciation

COPA National used a photo of our very own, **Bev Bonner and Alison Crerar** from a Discover Aviation Day, to thank all the many, many volunteers who give of their time and skills to not just COPA events but to everything related to Flying Club activities! It may take a village to raise a child but it takes dedicated volunteers to keep our Flying Club going!



This August we will celebrate the 80th Anniversary of the Vernon Flying Club and the Vernon Airport with an Airport Appreciation Day “*Fliers and Tires*”.

We’ll host a fly-in, static display of aircraft, classic cars, and motorcycles. There will be a variety of food trucks and entertainment.

One of the hangars will be transformed into a special lounge for the exhibitors to relax and congregate.

There will be something for young and old alike including the ever-popular Barrel Aeroplanes for the wee ones.

Stay tuned for more details!

Our Cessna 172 is available to rent. In order to rent the plane, you must be a member of the Vernon Flying Club in good standing. To access information about the plane rental you must sign up as a member of the website. Click *Log In* located in the top right corner to sign up. Only approved pilots (i.e. those who have successfully completed a check-out with one of our instructors) can see information about booking the club's Cessna 172. Check out the Rental Club page for how to become an approved pilot.



Membership Dues are payable on October 1st of each year for all members. For new members only, dues are assessed based on when they join:

\$100.00 October, November, December

\$75.00 January, February, March

\$50.00 April, May, June

\$25.00 July, August, September

Interac / e-Transfer to club email preferred method of payment.

**VERNON FLYING CLUB / COPA Flight 65
2025 / 2026**

PRESIDENT: Rob McDicken
VICE PRESIDENT: Cameron Bottrill
TREASURER: Betty Lee Longstaff
SECRETARY: Marion Ross
DIRECTOR: Alison Crerar

COPA CAPTAIN: Art Ratte

COPA Co-CAPTAIN: Cameron Bottrill

COPA Navigator: Keith Readner

TEMPORARY Newsletter Editor: Marion Ross

VFC Meetings are on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m.

e-mail: flyingclubvernon@gmail.com

website: www.vernonflyingclub.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/flyingclubvernon>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/vernonflyingclub/>



Photo by Ryan Cecchini –

The battered, old Stinson has left the Vernon Airport and has gone to Cold Lake, Alberta to be rebuilt. The new owner loves a challenge!